2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1

enable her to bear male children. The ladies again sang songs of greeting. Then the two bride-leaders manipulated the bride as though she were a lay figure. She was absolutely passive. They raised her to her feet, set her feet one after the other, shod in the wedding-boots, on to the steps of the carriage, and then on the ground. They then draped her with the red silk handkerchief sent her yesterday, and pinned it to the top of her head. Supported under the armpits she was slowly shuffled across the yard. It was but a few yards long, but her passage took full ten minutes. She was pelted with sweets, which a crowd of children gathered, and sprinkled with holy water, and led into the women's room. The bridegroom then arrived on foot and went to the men's room. I followed the bride. She was led backwards, and seated, still blinded by the veils, upon the chair in the corner. Her hands were laid on her sash and nervously grasped a folded handkerchief. Her immobility as her attendants handled her was so inhuman as to be almost horrible. One of her leaders carefully lifted a corner of her head-coverings and gave her lemonade to drink under it. The attendants themselves were then ceremoniously served with refreshments. They then removed her wedding-boots and put on the slippers, raised her to her feet, lifted a corner of her veil, said good-bye under it, and withdrew. The poor bride still stirred never a finger, but the violent heaving of her breast showed her on the verge of hysterics. She pulled herself together and the ordeal continued. One of the bridegroom's female relatives unpinned the red handkerchief from the bride's head and held it as a screen before her. Behind it her headdress was changed. Her white veil was removed, and a yellow beflowered silk one substituted.

The great moment had now come. We were to see her face. A lady on each side of her threw back the veil and showed her off. She was exposed to a crowd of staring females. Her head dropped modestly. Her attendants each placed a finger under her chin and raised it again. The sweat streamed down her face. They wiped it. They straightened her wide coat, settled her sash, and waved the flies off her. Such was her Spartan heroism that when a fly, unobserved by the attendants, crawled up her face, she did not even by a twitch show that she was alive. Then a front row of chairs was arranged and all the men came in. The bridegroom, witnesses, and father took their seats. The background was crowded with miscellaneous youths. They stared with all their eyes at the luckless girl, who in vain dropped or turned her head, only to have it put straight again.

Only the bridegroom held his head down and would not look. His witnesses grasped his chin and made him look, and he faltered, "But I've seen her already."

The wedding song then began:—

PEAKS OF SHALA

291 There were ten or twelve children—little girls half naked, with serious, beautiful faces and long-lashed brown eyes; small boys dignified in little long tight trousers of white wool beautifully braided in black, short fringed black jackets, and colored sashes and turbans like those of their [854] fathers. Two cradles stood near the fire, covered tightly over high footboards and headboards with heavy blankets; presently a woman partly uncovered one and, kneeling, offered her breast to the tiny baby tied down in it. Only the baby's puckered little face showed; arms and legs tightly bound, it lay motionless and uncomplaining, and when it was fed the mother kissed it tenderly and covered it again, carefully smoothing the many folds of thick wool and tucking the ends tightly beneath the cradle.

576 Meantime Cheremi was taking off our shoes and stockings and bathing our feet in cold water brought by one of the women. This was proper, since when guests arrive the member of the family nearest to them by ties of blood or affection acts as their servant, and Cheremi, being an Albanian who knew us, was judged to stand in that position. By the time we had drawn on dry woolen stockings from our packs the first 576 cup of coffee was ready. To the boiling water in 272 the tiny pot the coffee maker added two spoonfuls of the powdered coffee, two of sugar, stirred the mixture till it foamed, and poured it into a handleless little cup which he offered Perolli. But Perolli indicated me, and without the

[In home of Marka [58] Gjonni of Puk hist-Anal yst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

576 slightest revelation of his surprise the host
272 changed his gesture.

"Beauty and good to you," said I, in Albanian, prompted by Perolli, and when I had drunk the thimbleful, "Good trails!" said I, handing back the cup. For this is the manner in which one
273 drinks coffee. Do not make the mistake, when
576 next you are in the Albanian mountains, of saying the same things when you are offered rakejia. For rakejia there is a quite different form of courtesies. And as soon as the coffee cup, rinsed and refilled with freshly made coffee, has been given to each guest in turn, you will be offered rakejia.

Alex and Frances and I looked at one another, but we drained the large goblet of colorless liquid fire in turn, without a word of protest. It might have been the water that it looked like, so far as it affected our minds or tongues, for I continue to ascribe to the fire warmth and the blessed sensation of resting after those trails the sense of contentment that filled us all.

000 "Strange," I said, for I still dimly remembered another way of life, as though, perhaps, I had sometime dreamed it, "chimneys that don't draw make so much smoke in a room, yet here there is no chimney and a large fire, and we don't notice the smoke." And, leaning back on the piled blankets, I gazed up at the pale-blue clouds of it, rising beyond the firelight into a velvety darkness overhead. But I really felt that I had always lived thus, shut off by stone walls from the mountains and the night, ringed around by

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

the housekeeper who remained discreetly out of sight behind the door where she handed it to the men. She must wash up but warned by the proverb which says of work done badly by firelight because there are no lamps, 'Evening's work, morning's laugh', she waited till the next day. Then her task was much less formidable than one might think. At both the men's and the women's table everybody ate out of a common dish, fingers were used for a meat course, and one and the same wooden spoon dealt with soup and any semi-liquid food that followed. The men generally had their own spoons as they thought this more hygienic; they washed them themselves—rather sketchily—immediately after supper, and tucked them into their breast, ready for the next meal at home or at a friend's. If coffee was served, the master of the house or his deputy rinsed out the cups, for the precious utensils must never leave the sitting-room in case the women took to drinking coffee. Twenty men could sup on soup, meat, bread, curds and coffee without the housekeeper's having more than three centre dishes and the dining-table to wash.

A multiple household might contain as many as twenty persons, a goodly enough number but only a pale reflexion of past glories. All over north Albania it used to be the custom for brothers, first and even second cousins to live with their wives and children, and probably several aged uncles and aunts and young sisters, under the same roof. Enormous housefuls sometimes resulted. For instance, there were sixty-four people in Gjon Macaj's house in Perlat about 1900, ninety-five in Isuf Isaku's in Zdrâjshë in 1923, and seventy in Lushan Sadrija's in Shalë even more recently. The houses themselves, though conforming to the regulation pattern of men's sitting-room, kitchen, stables, store-rooms, and one bedroom for every family unit, were remarkably small by our standards. Quite a little bedroom suffices for seven or eight persons if they all sleep on the floor, and both the sitting-room and the kitchen often served as dormitories, the former for men guests and the unmarried or widowed men of the family and the latter for women guests and the widows of the family. The primary cause of this way of life was the lack of public security in former times. Enemies and bandits could wreak their will on a single-handed man, but had to respect one surrounded by well-armed guards, and these the trustiest possible, his nearest relatives. After Albania became independent, public security improved so much that the need for a family to see